

Youth: A Change Agent

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Various initiatives and programmes together with best practices in the skill development space can be scaled up and replicated across states to achieve the desired objective of making youth the change agent

S *killing is building a better India. If we have to move India towards development then skill development should be our mission”-Prime Minister on August 15, 2014.*

India is at the cusp of demographic transition wherein 65 per cent of the population is in the working age 15-59. This offers a unique opportunity to become the skill capital of the world to meet the skilled manpower requirements of ageing economies by appropriate skilling in consonance with the standards accepted across countries.

As per the National Youth Policy, 2014 all young persons in the age group 15-29 years constitutes youth population which is a diverse group with varying needs, aspirations and requirements. The youths as per 2011 Census comprises of 28 per cent of the population contributing about 34 per cent of India's Gross National Income (GNI). The contribution of youth to the GDP can be increased by increasing their labour force participation and their productivity.¹ The need of the hour is to empower youth to achieve their full potential and to enable India to be the leader in supply of skilled labour force.

The demographic advantage that India enjoys is not uniformly distributed across the country. There is a clear divide between peninsular

India comprising of West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and the hinterland states viz viz. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. While the peninsular states show a pattern closer to China and Korea, with sharp rises and declines in the working age population, the hinterland states remain relatively young and dynamic, characterized by a rising working age population for some time, plateauing out towards the middle of the century.² Demographically therefore, there are two India's, with implications for policy responses viz. a soon-to begin-ageing India (peninsular India) where the elderly and their needs will require greater attention; and a young India (Hinterland States) where providing education, skills, and employment opportunities must be the focus.

However, mobilizing the youth for vocational education/skill development is difficult in these States due to lack of willingness to migrate, inability to pay for training, lack of employers endorsements, low literacy level, lack of awareness, among others. The question of empowering the youth necessitates a glance into the youth participation in the labour market.

Youth and Labour market

The labour market indicators viz. labour force participation rates

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(employed or seeking work), workers population ratio and unemployment rate as given in Table 1 provides an important insight into the labour market conditions for youth in India.

It is evident from the Table 1 that there has been a decline in labour force participation rate for all age groups irrespective of gender and spatial distinction. However, the decline has been very sharp for the rural females which could be attributed to the absence of job opportunities in the rural areas or due to social/religious customs. The decline in the younger male age groups both in rural and urban areas is suggestive of youth's participation in education to enhance their skills before

entering the labour market. The trend in the work force participation rate for youth of different cohort groups in 15-29 age group are also similar to Labour Force Participation.

As regards the unemployment rate it varied between 6.1 per cent to 15.6 per cent across different age cohorts for all categories. The urban females(15-29) experienced the highest unemployment 15.6 per cent which may possibly be due to family support to females. In different youth age groups, the unemployment rate is high among the entry age group 15-19 across all categories and tends to decline as age advances but remains higher than the national average.

There is high level of youth unemployment especially among the educated youth hindering the reaping of the demographic advantage. As per the EUS 2011-12 data, the high unemployment rate among the educated youth is suggestive of increase in the job aspirations and mismatch between jobs and aspiration. It emerges from Table 2 that the unemployment rate is high not only among formal educated but also among the vocationally qualified that is diploma and certificate holders.

What emerges from the above analysis is a paradoxical situation where on the one hand youth are seeking jobs and industry is seeking skilled manpower but neither youth are

Table 1. Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio and Unemployment Rate among Youth of Different age Cohorts according to Usual Status

Age Group	Rural Male					
	1999-2000			2011-12		
	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR
15-19	532	503	6.5	333	303	11.4
20-24	889	844	6.2	788	742	6.9
25-29	975	950	3.2	963	942	2.8
15-29	-	741	5.1	-	616	6.1
All	540	531	-	553	543	-
Rural Female						
15-19	314	304	3.1	164	156	8.0
20-24	425	409	4.9	297	278	9.9
25-29	498	491	2.4	369	357	5.8
15-29	-	400	3.7	-	258	7.8
All	302	299	-	253	248	-
Urban Male						
15-19	366	314	15.4	256	223	14.4
20-24	755	658	13.9	664	594	11.6
25-29	951	883	7.5	951	906	5.3
15-29	-	593	11.5	-	558	8.9
All	542	518	-	563	546	-
Urban Female						
15-19	121	105	15.5	89	78	15.3
20-24	191	155	25.8	197	160	21.9
25-29	214	194	15.8	253	231	10.8
15-29	-	149	19.9	-	157	15.6
All	147	139	-	155	147	-

Source: Various rounds of NSSO Employment and Unemployment Surveys

Notes: 1. Labour force participation rate (LFPR) is defined as the number of persons/person-days in the labour force (which includes both the employed and unemployed) per 1000 persons /person-days. 2. Worker Population Ratio (WPR) is defined as the number of persons/person-days employed per 1000 persons/person-days. 3. Unemployment Rate (UR) is defined as the number of persons/person-days unemployed per 1000 persons/person-days in the labour force.

getting jobs nor Industry manpower. This skill mismatch makes youth unemployable which could be due to either demand for a particular type of skill exceeding the supply of people with that skill at equilibrium rates of wages or the level of qualification or the field of qualification is different from that required to perform the job adequately; or there is mismatch between educational qualification and potential to get absorbed in appropriate jobs; or skill has become obsolete due to technological improvement.

Young job seekers make up about 49 per cent of the total unemployed in India with 93 per cent of the available work provided by the informal sector, a significant part of well-educated youth in India are either unemployed, under employed, seeking employment or between jobs or coping with insecure work arrangement. As per the latest India skill report 2017 about 40 per cent of the educated youth are employable. The challenge is to address the problem of working poor, insecurity at the work place, lack of market linked skills, information asymmetry, poor perception about skill development. What emanates from above is need to (i) match supply to current demand for skills (ii) help workers and enterprises adjust to change; and (iii) building and sustaining competencies for future labour market needs. The question is how to strategise improvement in employability.

Initiatives for Employability

To harness the demographic advantage and making youth employable, National Skill Development Mission together with new National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was launched in 2015. The mission is focusing on creating a pipeline of skilled people; upskilling and reskilling to align supply for demand; advocating National Skill Qualification Framework to facilitate certification according to common and global standards; connecting and matching supply and demand and catalyzing the entrepreneurship. The various initiatives/ programmes focus on synergy across ministries, mobilisation and engagement, global partnerships, outreach and advocacy, use of ICT, training of trainers and taking measures for improving access and outreach of programmes by various disadvantaged groups.

There is a big push for vocational education both in terms of capacity and quality improvement by reorienting the vocationalisation of school education from class 9 onwards and involving the industry in course curriculum, practical training and facilitating teachers training; reforming and reorienting Industrial Training institutes in terms of industry driven relevant curricula, flexi MOUs with industrial partners, greater use of technology in delivery and better industry connect through sector skill

councils; Focus on apprenticeship training with dedicated web portal and flexibility to hire apprentices; New institutions in terms of multi skilling institutes in PPP mode for better industry connect and addressing the skill requirement of changing world of work. Skill universities are being envisaged to develop a large pool of qualified instructors, conduct research in curricula and pedagogy in vocational education and provide oversight over skill institutions.

The various initiatives by 20 central ministries including Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship can be broadly categorised as general programmes, region specific and sector specific programmes for enhancing the employability of the youth. There are more 13000 than institutes, about 4000 polytechnics and more than 20000 vocational training providers catering to different skill needs. They are facilitating individuals to realise their full potential through a process of lifelong learning wherein the competencies are accumulated through instruments such as credible certification, credit accumulation and transfer. Given that large proportion of work force is employed in informal sector with limited skills and are required to be assessed for certification, the recognition of prior learning under PMKVY is an important step for inclusion of such workers through skill upgradation and reskilling. The

Table-2 Unemployment Rate at usual status (adjusted) as per Education level for 2011-12

General Education Level	Unemployment Rate (15-29 years)			
	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Not literate	2.3	0.8	2.5	1.6
Literate & up to Primary	3.2	0.6	4.8	4.3
Middle school	4.2	4.6	5.1	5.8
Secondary	4.6	8.6	5.5	15.1
Higher Secondary	6.5	13.8	12.0	14.6
Diploma/certificate	15.9	30.0	12.5	17.3
Graduate& above	19.1	29.6	16.3	23.4
All	5.0	4.8	8.1	13.1

PMKVY is providing second chance to high school drop outs to enter the labour market with employable skills. However, this requires strong advocacy to promote paradigm shift in the labour market to make skill training aspirational.

The National Skill Development Agency is taking forward the systemic interventions viz. National Skill Qualification Framework which facilitates both horizontal and vertical mobility and makes skill aspirational; Common Norms for various Central government driven programmes for uniformity in cost, duration and curriculum; Labour Market Information System to address the information asymmetry for different stakeholders; monitoring the progress of skilling in the country etc. The National Skill Development Corporation is catalysing the private sector efforts for ramping up the infrastructure as also the actual delivery of training to be able to achieve the targets set in the policy, 2015. The Sector Skill Councils, industry led bodies, are facilitating linkage of training with demand through development of course curriculum helping in assessment and certification. Government has launched skill loan initiative with the objective of facilitating poor students attending skill development programmes.

Although necessary policy and programmatic interventions have been undertaken but much more needs to be done to leverage the youth power through appropriate skilling for economic development. The key elements of strategy for leveraging the youth power are discussed.

Leveraging Youth Power:

Mapping Aspiration of the Youth

Mapping aspirations is key for sustainable skill development to facilitate access to decent employment opportunities for socio economic inclusion. The analysis of available data(EUS,2011-12) for training indicates preference for certain trades in the rural and urban areas viz. 22.3



percent males received/were receiving formal vocational training in ‘driving and motor mechanic work’ while among urban males 26.3 percent were in ‘computer trades’. Similarly among rural females, 32.2 percent were receiving training in ‘textile related work’ and among urban females computer trade was most sought after with 30.4 per cent. When one super imposes this data on the skill gap reports by NSDC, the mismatch emerges between requirement and output from training institutes. The high employment generating sectors as per the National Skill Development Corporation reports may face challenges of attracting skilled manpower. The Aspiration Matrix based on NSDC Skill Gap Reports in Annex 1 supports this and highlights the need for mapping aspiration for effective demand supply match. The aspiration matrix shows that, in most states, there is greater demand in sectors such as construction, transportation and logistics, agriculture and allied activities including food processing, but the demand for these occupations is low in most states.

Therefore, mapping aspiration is critical for demand supply match and fulfilling economy requirement. It is felt that recognition and awards for excellence in skill would motivate and

encourage youth for skill training. The awareness about dignity of labour from young age would help in changing the perception about the blue-collared jobs. Different mechanisms can be used for popularizing the skill programmes and creation of aspirations. This would facilitate mobilisation.

Mobilisation Key for Scaling

As per the National Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy 2015, India needs to skill 110 million and reskill/upskill 290 million by 2022. This mammoth task requires mobilising students and youth across regions for skilling. The success of a skill training programme depends on how best we are able to mobilise. In the current scenario, the mobilisation of a candidate is left to the training provider. The poor mobilisation is due to lack of information about vocational courses and labour market outcomes; affordability of vocational courses; unwillingness to migrate; outdated curriculum etc. The need of the hour is a specific strategy to mobilise the prospective trainees. The Skill Sakhi Model of Maharashtra Government wherein young women from the community are trained to mobilise women for skill development programme is a novel way of creating

Aspiration Matrix

Demographically Advantageous States	Demand for Manpower in Sectors	Youth Aspirations		
		High	Average	Low
Uttar Pradesh	building, construction and real estate', 'organised retail,' and 'banking, financial services and insurance'	IT / ITES, organized retail and Media & Entertainment	BFSI, healthcare, hospitality and food processing	Building and construction, transportation, agriculture and allied, textile, other manufacturing, pharmaceuticals
Delhi	retail, construction, transportation, domestic help, IT & ITES, hospitality, healthcare, education and banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI)	Retail, IT & BPO, Education, Auto & Auto Parts, Public Administration, Electrical Equipment, Textile & Apparel, Electronics & Hardware	Construction, transportation, hospitality, BFSI, auto maintenance, healthcare, media & entertainment, metallic products, non-metallic products, printing & publishing, food processing, chemical & pharmaceuticals.	Domestic help, security personnel, wholesale trade, wood & furniture, real estate services.
Jharkhand	building and construction, tourism hospitality and travel, trade, food processing, real estate services, banking and finance, engineering products and transportation and logistics	food processing, banking and finance, engineering products, textiles and garments, automobile, health care, education & skill development and IT-ITES.	Tourism, hospitality travel and trade, Real Estate & Business Services, media & communication, electricity, gas and water supply	building and construction, mining, handloom & handicrafts, organized retail, leather & leather goods, chemical & pharmaceuticals.
Madhya Pradesh	Construction, Retail, Agriculture & allied activities, Textile, Transportation and logistics, Mineral processing	IT-ITES, Healthcare, Education and skill development, Auto and Auto components, Media and entertainment	Hospitality Banking and financial Services, Textile Transportation and logistics Mineral processing	Construction, Retail, Agriculture & allied activities, Textile, Transportation and logistics, Mineral processing
Rajasthan	Electrician, Computer Based Accountancy & IT, Mobile Repairing, Wiring & Repairing (domestic), Automobiles mechanic, Courier Delivery, Sales & marketing, Gems & Jewellery, Handicrafts & Handloom	Electrician	Handicrafts & Handloom	Mobile Repairing, Computer Based Accountancy & IT, Wiring & Repairing (domestic), Courier Delivery, Sales & marketing, Gems & Jewellery
West Bengal	Construction, retail, agriculture & allied, MSME, jute-textile, agro-food processing	IT / ITES, healthcare, Banking and financial Services, repairing & maintenance, engineering-auto, education & training, gems & jewelry	tourism, travel & hospitality, transportation & logistics, communication, rubber & plastics, electronics & hardware.	Construction, retail, agriculture & allied, MSME, jute-textile, agro-food processing
Maharashtra	IT / ITES, organized retail, construction, agriculture & allied, chemicals & pharmaceuticals, gems & jewelry	IT / ITES, organized retail, tourism, travel & hospitality, food processing, auto & auto components	Media & entertainment, BFSI, transportation & logistics, healthcare, education & skill development, textile & clothing	building and construction, other manufacturing, agriculture & allied, chemicals & pharmaceuticals, gems & jewellery
Tamil Nadu	Construction, retail and travel, hospitality & tourism and travel, BFSI, automobile	Automobile, IT / ITES, tourism, travel & hospitality, Retail, BFSI, Electronics Hardware, Education	Textiles, Media & entertainment, transport, logistics, healthcare, real estate.	Leather, construction, Food processing, gems & jewellery, chemicals & pharmaceuticals, furniture, agriculture, handlooms & handicrafts.

Source: NSDC Skill Gap Reports 2012, data compiled by Dr Sakshi Khurana, YP, NITI AAYOG

local change makers and involving the community for taking ahead the agenda of skill development. Local bodies functionaries can be change makers and help in creating database of youth to be supported either with wage/self-employable skill training with proper advocacy and outreach. The database can be uploaded on the SSDM portal with linkage to Aadhar card, Voter ID, Bank account. The functionaries can be assigned additional duty of door to door campaign, parents, counselling and listing of unemployed youth for skilling.

A National Awareness Campaign including contact programs with schools, colleges and other educational institutions and role models to highlight labour market outcomes will attract a large number of trainees to various sectors.

Addressing Diversity

The Indian Labour Market shows sectoral, gender and spatial diversity. Labour market has a preponderance of informal employment (93 per cent) with just about 8 per cent working in the formal sector. The training requirement of both sectors varies. The poor division of labour in the informal sector points to lack of skill specialisation and on the job learning hampering productivity. The sector has poor education and skill levels of workers.³ The National Apprenticeship Programme needs to be used for better skilled manpower.

Women constitute about 48 per cent of the total population but their participation in the labour force is just about 22 per cent. The Prime Minister had said “If the capacity of women is built and they are linked with the development process, then the development of any country gets speed up exponentially”. The need of the hour is to focus on skilling / reskilling women to make them ready to join the labour market. The specific policy intervention for increasing women participation requires providing adequate logistic support, special focus on both skilling/reskilling and readiness on the part of employers to

employ them and provide them with opportunities to return as part of the working population. There is also need to break the gender stereotyping for women participation and encouraging women to participate in activities and skills which are different from routine. In this regard, the initiative by Government of Haryana for building capacities of women in occupations in the steel sector with the help of Jindal Steels is worth replicating.

Not only there are sectoral and gender variations but there are infrastructure gaps in the North and North Eastern region vis a vis Southern and Western region. While the Southern and the Western regions account for 67 per cent of private and governments ITIs catering to 51 per cent of population with 60 per cent of seating capacity, the North and East zones accounts for only 33 per cent of ITIs catering to 49 per cent percent of population with 40 per cent of seating capacity.⁴ Not only this, there are significant state wise variations within each zone. It is necessary to focus on infrastructure creation in these regions and wherever possible leveraging the facilities created in the Western and Southern regions for reskilling and upskilling of those who are migrating from these regions to other areas where employment opportunities exist. This may also call for migration support centres both in the source and the destination states. The efficiencies of private sector needs to be leveraged either in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility or direct participation in infrastructure development, on the job training, apprenticeship training, training of trainers, curriculum revision for creating a future job ready workforce.

Second Chance: Reskilling/Up Skilling of Prior Learning

A large proportion of youth drops out before they complete secondary education. As per the 12th Plan (2012-17) 47 per cent of students drop out before they complete secondary education. As a result when they enter the labour market, they have very low level of skills and they work at low

wages. There is need to provide them an opportunity of improving their skill levels through reskilling and upskilling. There are a large number of programmes both at the state and central level for enhancing employability but there is need for clear distinction among programmes for skilling, reskilling and upskilling to achieve the desired targets as specified in the national policy. The challenge is to identify such workers. There is need for creating the Skill Gap Analysis, developing content for skill development and on-the-ground hands-on training delivery. There is need for rigorous evaluation to have a fuller understanding of the skills training most likely to work for optimum utilisation of funds translation of training to better outcomes in terms of jobs, wages, improved quality of life and productivity.

There is also a need for recognition of prior learning specially for those who have joined the labour market early and have experience but no certificate and also those who have skills passed on from generation to generation, mainly the artisans and handicraft workers. The RPL has the potential to improve employability, mobility, lifelong learning, social inclusion and self-esteem. In India, there is need to ramp up especially when 298.25 million workers are to be reskilled/upskilled and RPL, Ministry of Skill Development National Policy focuses on this and efforts are on to scale up but the challenge lies in identification for RPL. There is no one RPL model that is suitable for all qualifications and all situations; in particular, different sectors give rise to different models. For RPL to be locally effective, there must be policy learning and not policy borrowing. Success of RPL, among other things, depends on awareness about RPL, effective vocational guidance and counselling services, integrating it with policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for education and training systems; active participation of all stakeholders; effective institutional framework for RPL; matching of occupational standards and qualification standards (the matching should at least take

place at part level, if not that of a full qualification; effective and efficient assessment tools and methodologies appropriate to the context of target groups; cost-sharing and a sustainable, equitable funding mechanism for RPL; providing skills upgrading opportunities to RPL candidates etc.⁵

School to Work Transition Surveys (SWTS)

Improving the quantity and quality of labour market information for youth (15-29 years) is necessary. The labour force survey provides information on employment, unemployment and out of labour force and also allows to generate indicators like length of unemployment, status in employment, employment by sector. However, it does not provide information on job satisfaction, ease or difficulty of the school-to-work transition. The SWTS would provide timely and relevant labour market information for strategizing design and implementation of national employment programmes which encompass the specific employment challenges of young women and men. These would help in identifying vulnerable groups so that policymakers can take informed decisions that target the right population. These surveys would facilitate the National Career Service helping youth's transition to more satisfactory and secure jobs. These would also facilitate measures to address various diversities in the labour market and governments might focus on establishing incentives for enterprises to provide training for employees, targeting especially those who would not normally receive it.⁶ This would facilitate in addressing the future job challenges emerging due to Industrial revolution.

To conclude, the rapid economic changes and future job scenario offers both a challenge and opportunity to youth to enhance their employability for a better life. The enhanced employability would ensure job security and career progression thereby empowering youth to contribute to economic growth and be benefited out of the growth as well. Various initiatives and programmes together with best practices in the skill development space

can be scaled up and replicated across states to achieve the desired objective of making youth the change agent.

Endnotes

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Sagarmala-DDUGKY Convergence for Skill Development in Coastal Districts

For skills development of youth in coastal areas, the Ministry of Shipping signed an MoU with the Ministry of Rural Development in New Delhi recently. The MoU is for convergence of the Ministry's prestigious project Sagarmala and Ministry of Rural Development's flagship programme Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU GKY).

This MoU is expected to meet the exact skill needs of industries in the port and maritime sector and provide the coastal communities right skills for better opportunities emanating from the large scale impact of Sagarmala projects. With skill development there will be close involvement of the coastal communities in Sagarmala and will make them contributors in the economic development and will ensure inclusive growth of the coastal districts of the country.

The Coastal Communities are key stakeholders in the Sagarmala Programme and their skill development and livelihood is an important objective of the program. A budget of Rs.100 Cr. has been allocated under Sagarmala for coastal community development activities Along with the Skill gap studies, District Action Plans have been made in consultation with the State Governments and districts concerned. Specific training needs have been identified for more than 60000 trainees in the next phase through more than 100+ skill projects.